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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A DATELESS BARGAIN.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

"UNCLE ARCHIE, rough weather is setting in, I can't leave Mab alone in the wind and the hail," wrote Joyce, in response to the old gentleman's entreaties that she would at once come to him in Gloucestershire and make her home there, or anywhere else in the world she might choose so long as it was in company with him and Aunt Bell.

Uncle Archie rubbed his eyes over the letter. Was this Joyce, the common-place, the clear-headed writing? Had the mantle of the dead sister fallen upon her? he asked himself, for though the bold, free hand was Joyce's, the diction was none of hers; it was Mab's.

Off and on the old gentleman fussed a good deal that day—declared that his shoes were beginning to pinch him again; a statement which set Aunt Bell's heart fluttering with the possibility that the truce between him and his old enemy the gout had come to an end.

She grew anxious and sympathetic immediately. "It was that curry last night, I felt sure they had put cocoanut into it—I mean," she corrected herself, "it's all that new bootmaker—I said from the first those soles were too narrow."

Uncle Archie cut both sympathy and anxiety short, by ordering instant preparations for a journey to the North.

"If it's on crutches I must go to her, since she will not come to me," he said with decision.

And Aunt Bell, knowing better than to attempt a remonstrance, set about the packing at once.

Just for once in her forty-five years, Mrs. Bullen sang a song to the same tune as Uncle Archie.

"You can't live on here for ever, Joyce," she reasoned, "and if you want to be quiet and not see a soul, you need only go down into Gloucestershire and stay with Uncle Archie. You can be just as wretched there as here, the only difference will be that you'll have a few more comforts about you."

And then she launched into a tirade against the little Scotch watering-place, putting foremost among its shortcomings its lack of a dressmaker, who could lay down the law for them concerning the depth and the cut of their crape garments.

At this point the old General made his infrequent voice heard.

"Let her alone—for the present, at any rate," he said pityingly; "don't you see she's broken-hearted?"

So they let Joyce alone. With this result; every "darkest hour before the dawn,"—the last hour of Mab's life—found her crossing the heath which sloped down to the churchyard in the hollow; every day that broke, no matter whether sullen and stormy, or golden and gay, saw her hiding the ugliness of the newly-made mound, which marked Mab's resting-place, with masses of dewy purple heather, late marguerites, and flowering grasses; all the autumn glories left to the heath.

Then, this sweet, solemn task ended, she would sit in the long grass with one arm thrown across the mound, watching the night clouds beaten off the tops of the hills, the night blue—which held their base for some ten minutes after—little by little torn into shreds and swept into nothingness by the red flames of the dawn that came surging up from behind the cliffs—itself like some great glorified sea.

But though Joyce would sit there, still

and silent, watching out the changes of the fleeting panorama of the morning, she had no eye for its glories, no ear for that wild rush and crescendo of bird notes which filled the dark air, and rose high and higher with the day. Only one thought held her heart, as she sat there in the mossy hollow, with unseeing eyes staring into the dimness or the radiance of the dawn. "My darling, would to Heaven you and I could change places. It would be better for us both!"

For at last, after many sore struggles for its life, hope was dead within her. It had gone into the grave with Mab. If Joyce had tried she could not have made her heart thrill to any one of the chance clues, improbable or possible surmises, which the day's post might bring. With limp fingers she would hold her packet of letters, with limp fingers she would lay them by. Despair held the day now. Frank's fate, whatever it was, must be a thing of the past, which perhaps only the light of Eternity would reveal to her. So the close of each day saw her laying her head on her pillow with the moan which sorrow and suffering have made common to humanity, "How long, how long?" and each day's beginning found her sitting among the graves with the bitter cry on her lips, "Would to Heaven you and I could change places, my darling."

CHAPTER XLV.

SOMETIMES Joyce would lose count of time as she sat thus beside Mab's grave, and the sun would be high in the heavens before she would arouse herself to think of going back to the house. Mab's grave was in the loneliest part of the lonely churchyard. No village life ever strayed through that churchyard's mossy paths. It was an island of silence in what was not a very stirring sea at its best. Its grey stone wall was completely hidden from view by some stunted yews and an undergrowth of wild rose bushes. Through a break in this tangled screen, Joyce could catch a glimpse of the wide heath. The sea and the beach lay out of sight a couple of hundred feet or so below.

Once, as she sat thus—her face turned towards the cliffs, her arm thrown across the heather-heaped mound, her hat beside her in the long grass—she saw, yet without seeing, a small, dark figure on the edge of the cliffs, making a silhouette against the blue sky. Anon it vanished. She was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to

notice by which path it had disappeared; or how, leaving the cliffs' edge abruptly, it had followed the narrow, sloping path which led straight to the churchyard.

Ten minutes after a shadow fell upon the grass at her feet, and a voice sounded in her ear, saying "Miss Joyce! Miss Joyce!"

She looked up to see Kathleen O'Shea—in deep black like herself—standing a yard or so on the other side of Mab's grave.

The voice was respectful, grave to solemnity. Joyce, however, was not inclined to give it a welcome. When Kathleen might have been of service to her she had held aloof. There was nothing at the present moment to render her presence anything but an intrusion.

"Yes, I am here," she answered coldly, not rising, but merely turning her head towards the girl; "do you wish to speak to me? Have you come over from Lough Lea to see me?"

For an instant the two pale faces looked at each other.

"I have not come straight from Lough Lea, Miss Joyce," answered Kathleen; "I have been to Overbury to attend Ned's funeral. From Overbury I went to Greenock two or three days ago—" here Joyce looked up at her inquiringly. Kathleen went on: "I came over to Tretwick by coach from Newton Stewart the first thing this morning. They told me at your house where I should find you."

"Poor Ned! Poor Ned!" said Joyce; and there came a softer note in her voice as she said it, wondering much over the mystery which lay behind the young Irishman's fate, and whether, in this life, it would ever be given to her to know it.

"I had a commission entrusted to me by Ned," Kathleen went on, "and I have come to you to-day to fulfil it—it was to give you this, Miss Joyce." Here she drew out of the pocket of her travelling cloak the old-fashioned silver watch.

Joyce, however, did not offer to take it.

Kathleen looked wistfully at her for a moment, but there came no gleam of intelligence into Joyce's eye. Evidently Ned's meaning in his last legacy was a blank to her.

"I had some trouble to get it, Miss Joyce," she began falteringly. Then she broke off abruptly, and as though moved by a sudden impulse, laid the watch beside Joyce among the heaped-up flowers on the grave.

"He must have meant it for Mab," said Joyce sadly, thinking how fitly it lay there

amid the heather, the dead Irishman's tribute of devotion to his dead benefactress. "Poor Ned! If only he had come to me that night instead of lying in wait—" she broke off hastily. It occurred to her that most probably Kathleen knew nothing of Ned's hurried visit to Tretwick, and the ugly suspicions which connected him with Buckingham's death.

But Kathleen flashed into a sudden fire for which Joyce was unprepared.

"Miss Joyce," she cried, "Ned did well to lie in wait for that bad, black-hearted man, and speak his mind to him. He did better when he fought him, as they say he did, and thrust him backward over the cliff. He would have done better still if he had tossed his body out into the rough sea while he was about it, instead of letting it be brought in here for Christian burial."

Joyce looked up astonished. She put her astonishment into questions.

"Why did you—why did Ned ever have anything to do with the man, then, if you thought thus of him? Why did you not stay quietly with us in England, instead of rushing off in that foolish fashion to marry a man who——"

Once more she broke off hastily. She had no right, she felt, to utter to this young wife the suspicions which filled her own mind as to Bryan O'Shea's complicity in Fenian conspiracies with Captain Buckingham.

A curious expression passed over Kathleen's face. She suddenly came round the grave and stood beside Joyce, laying her hand on her arm.

"Miss Joyce," she whispered scarcely above her breath, "do you want to know why I married Bryan O'Shea? Shall I tell you the whole truth, now, from beginning to end?"

Then without waiting for Joyce's reply, she went on hurriedly in the same low tone:

"It was because my heart was breaking—yes, breaking for news of Mr. Ledyard—that I did it. I said to myself one of those four men know what has become of him—Ned, Captain Buckingham, Bryan, or Maurice O'Shea. Ned I had tried to move, and could not. Captain Buckingham, I knew, was cruel and hard as death itself. Maurice was such a liar that I could not believe him on his oath. But Bryan—even if he would not tell me what I wanted to know for the asking—I knew I could get secrets out of if I married him and gave him plenty of whisky. There was nothing

else in life for me to do. I meant always to marry him on your wedding-day."

A great rush of jealous pride swept over Joyce.

"You—you tell me this," she cried, drawing back a step and shaking Kathleen's touch from her arm.

But the next moment love had trampled her jealousy under foot. She caught Kathleen's hands in hers, almost crushing them in her vehemence.

"Oh, Kathleen!" she cried passionately, her words coming all but incoherently, "you loved him; I felt it—I knew it. For the love of Heaven tell me what you have found out! Don't keep me waiting, while you spin out excuses for what you did. Out of mercy tell me all you know—in one word, if it be possible."

Kathleen's head drooped.

"Alas, Miss Joyce!" she said brokenly, "not in one word nor yet in one hundred, can I tell you what your heart is aching to know. I've learnt nothing—no, not one single syllable about Mr. Ledyard; though I've found out some other things I want you to know, and I've come here to-day on purpose to tell them to you."

Joyce let go the girl's hands, and sank once more on the ground beside Mab's grave, bowing her head and hiding her face.

Kathleen knelt on the grass beside her.

"Miss Joyce," she said, in a voice that seemed to grow suddenly stern and harsh, "there are other broken hearts in the world beside yours. Think of my old father and mother! How they worshipped Ned, and how his miserable hunted life and dog's death must haunt them to their dying day! And think of me!" Here there came a ring of passion, or it might have been of self-scorn, into the hard voice, "tied for life to a man whom I hate, and whose hand I know is red with my brother's blood!"

Joyce drew her hands quickly from her face.

"Is that true? Did Bryan O'Shea shoot Ned?" she asked in a tone of horror.

"Ay, Miss Joyce, it's true enough. And what's more, I knew beforehand he'd have it to do, and power I had none to stop him."

"Oh, Kathleen, Kathleen! what do you mean? You knew—yet had no power to prevent! Why, I would have moved heaven and earth to save a brother's life."

"Would you, Miss Joyce? Not if you knew what I know, and had seen what I've

seen since I've been Bryan O'Shea's wife. I might have prevented Bryan shooting Ned, perhaps; but only one way, by taking Bryan's revolver and shooting him through the heart. Then I should have been handed over to the police to be dealt with. But, all the same, Ned would have been shot, and the man who shot him would not have been handed over to the police."

For a moment Joyce's face flushed with indignation.

"It is monstrous—justice ought to be done. It is my duty, your duty, to denounce this man as a murderer," she cried vehemently.

"If we did, Miss Joyce, there's not a soul could be brought to prove our words, and a good score at least who would swear he was a hundred miles away when the deed was done. But all the same, he'll suffer for it." Here there came a sudden gleam in the girl's eyes. "He's too sure a shot not to have work of this sort given him again to do, and one day he'll get his death by it. But not yet—no, and I don't want it to be yet."

"You want to try and forgive him first?" questioned Joyce, a little doubtfully.

Kathleen laughed a bitter laugh.

"I try to forgive him! There's little enough of forgiveness he'll get out of me, Miss Joyce. No; he shall suffer, and just exactly as he made me suffer. The 'Red Right-hand of the League,' as they call it, has 'removed' my brother; the Red Right-hand of the League shall 'remove' his."

"Kathleen!"

Once more the two pale faces looked at each other. But the face of one was that of a strong soul compelled to the weakness of an inert submission; the face of the other, that of a weak soul impelled to the transient strength of a purpose of revenge.

"Ah! and he loves that brother, Miss Joyce, just as I loved mine. Weak, tipsy, and stupid though Maurice O'Shea is, Bryan loves him, and——" she broke off abruptly. For another moment there fell a pause. When Kathleen resumed it was in a more even tone. "I want to tell you this morning, Miss Joyce, all about this League. When you've heard it, you can make up your mind who you'll tell it to."

Joyce's heart began to beat wildly. After all, the girl had something to tell! True, it might be something to lead them down a blind alley straight to a blank wall again; or, possibly, might take them by a circuitous road to a hidden grave; but, in any case, it must be told, and must be listened to.

"Tell me everything you know, from beginning to end—everything," she implored.

But Kathleen had a condition to impose.

"Before I tell you one word, Miss Joyce, you must give me your solemn, sacred promise, that my name shall not be mentioned to the police as an informer—no, nor to living soul!" she said with decision.

Joyce drew a long breath. A promise might prove an embarrassment. Yet she dared not throw difficulties in the way of the girl's confidences.

"Tell me how you got this knowledge; how you found out what you have to tell," she asked by way of gaining time for herself.

"How I found out? Didn't I marry Bryan O'Shea on purpose to find out?" Kathleen answered excitedly. "He was fool enough to think I married him because I loved him, but he found out his mistake before the wedding-day was over. Then his love turned to hate quick enough, and——" she stopped for a moment, then resumed. "Well, no matter. He thought he had frightened and mastered me. He did not know how I used to hide and creep about the house, and listen when he and Maurice were sitting up late and talking over their work, thinking I was fast asleep upstairs. I never let a chance slip, not one, Miss Joyce. When Bryan used to take too much whisky, he would let fall hints which I took good care not to remind him of the next morning, but which were easy enough to fit on to something else I had heard before."

Here Joyce interrupted her impatiently.

"Tell me at once all you have to tell," she said.

"But I want your promise—your solemn promise, Miss Joyce, that my name shall not be mentioned to living soul," said Kathleen, doggedly. "Remember, if my name gets whispered about, I am doomed."

Joyce thought again.

"You must let me tell Uncle Archie, or how can I make use of what you tell me? I will make him give me his word of honour that your name shall not pass his lips. Will that do?"

For a moment Kathleen remained silent. Joyce's impatience grew upon her.

"Come, Kathleen, do not keep me in suspense; you ought to know you can trust my word, Uncle Archie's word——"

Kathleen looked at her steadily.

"Yes, I know I can trust you, Miss Joyce, and Mr. Shenstone too, but no one else."

"There will be no one else to trust. I give you my solemn promise that your name shall not be mentioned by either of us to living soul. Now begin at the very beginning—tell me all about this League—all about your troubles and Ned's, which, I suppose, began with these miserable plots and conspiracies."

Kathleen drew a long breath.

"Mine began about three years ago, Miss Joyce, when I went to stay with father's people at Lough Lea, and I first met Bryan O'Shea. He was always fierce, and wild, and passionate, and half frightened me into promising to marry him. I was glad enough to get back home again, and would have forgotten all about my promise, only Ned wouldn't let me. Ned, Bryan, and Maurice had all joined one of these dreadful societies at the same time. Bryan was cruel and reckless, and did all that was wanted of him ruthlessly. He could turn the women and children out of their warm beds into the cold fields in the dead of night, and beat the old men nearly to death, particularly if he owed them a grudge for anything that had happened years ago."

Joyce shuddered. "Go on," she said again.

"Ned was altogether as tender-hearted. He used to cry off a lot of things that the O'Sheas volunteered for. Bryan and Maurice went up in high favour with the heads of their society; Ned went down. He and Bryan were soon in what they call different grades, and Bryan made things very hard for Ned, because he took it into his head that he was preventing me keeping my promise to marry him. At times, I think, Ned was half desperate, and scarcely knew what he was doing or saying."

"Poor Ned! Poor Ned!"

"It was poor Ned when Captain Buckingham came on the scene, Miss Joyce. He met him one day coming out of your house in Eaton Square, and thought he would be useful on dark nights for messages and that sort of thing, because he had no brogue whatever, and so couldn't be identified as an Irishman in the dark. Captain Buckingham was just then forming a branch association for some special work that was going on. It was to consist of himself and three other members. He and Maurice and Bryan were enrolled the first three; Ned joined as a fourth.

"This branch society was pledged to do the hardest and the roughest of the society's work. Captain Buckingham they

called Joshua, because he had removed the hands from his watch, vowing that for him time stood still till vengeance was executed upon the oppressors of Ireland. The members had a sign and a counter-sign. The sign was the question, 'What time is it, friend?' as they laid their hands upon their watches, the counter-sign was the answer, 'Time stands still,' as they drew their watches out and showed that they had not been wound up. They used to meet once a week in Brewer's Court, till——"

Here she broke off.

"I know," ejaculated Joyce. "Go on, tell me everything."

She was listening breathlessly now to every word that fell from the girl's lips.

Kathleen resumed her story at another point.

"When they found that they had drawn the eyes of the police on them in London, they thought it better to remove what they called the centre for correspondence to a quiet part of Ireland. So Miss Buckingham arranged a centre for them in County Down—Miss Joyce, that woman is every whit as bad and heartless as her brother was!"

"Ah!"

"She's worse in one way, for she never runs the slightest risk herself in any shape or form, though she throws plenty of danger in the way of others. No, she has her comfortable home at the Abbey House, and she goes to her balls and her dinners dressed in her silks and her satins. But wherever her shadow falls there follows misery for some poor soul. Say she dines twenty miles from Lough Lea one night; next day there come a troop of boys ploughing up a decent farmer's land, and the farmer himself is found in a ditch nearly beaten to death. Or she dances at a ball at some far-away place, where everything is quiet and happy; within twenty-four hours there comes a Moonlighter's raid for arms, someone is shot dead, or the house and ricks are fired, and the poor people are left starving."

The girl's own vehemence compelled her to pause a moment.

Joyce said nothing. There was that in Kathleen's manner which puzzled her and made speech a difficulty.

Kathleen went on again, rapidly as before.

"And as for deceit and lies, ah, I've matched her at that just for once in a way! She thinks she's sending off to New York her brother's watch and Ned's watch. It's one of the articles of the League that, if a

man dies in the work, his watch is to be handed to the Council, who will pass it on to a man willing to be sworn in to take up the dead man's work. Well, she's welcome to her brother's watch; it's little enough good it'll do to any man who gets it. But as for Ned's——"

Again the girl broke off, then turning suddenly to Joyce, asked in a quieter tone :

"And you'll tell all this to the police, Miss Joyce?"

"Undoubtedly, word for word."

"Ah, they'll never form a timeless league again, as they used to call it—in England, at any rate. The Captain's dead——"

"Where is Maurice O'Shea?" interrupted Joyce.

"Don't know, Miss Joyce. The League will find him out safe enough."

"The League! The police, you mean."

Kathleen laughed. "Ah, there are some who do their work better than the police; but they'll be out in their reckoning for once in a way."

Joyce was troubled; bewildered also; some hidden meaning seemed to lie behind Kathleen's words; she felt herself at a loss.

"Where is Bryan?" she asked, wondering whether the girl's answer would let in a ray of light.

"I don't know, Miss Joyce. I daresay I shall soon enough when he sends for me to join him somewhere in America—New York, perhaps," answered Kathleen in a bitter, careless tone.

"Sends for you! Could you live under the same roof with that man? Surely you would not go?"

Kathleen's face grew set and rigid.

"Yes, I should go," she answered slowly. "I wouldn't have blood spilt on mother's doorstep. I shouldn't dare refuse to go if they sent for me; but New York would never see me. There are some who start for it, but never land."

The last words were said in a tone so low, that they could not have reached Joyce's ear had they not been spoken with an emphasis which doubled their meaning.

They roused in Joyce that protective, defending instinct, always so strong in strong natures, but which, with her, had known no outlet since Mab had been laid in her grave. She made one step towards Kathleen, put her arm round her shoulders, drawing the girl close to her.

"Kathleen," she said kindly, "you shall not go if they send for you a

thousand times over. You shall stay here with me; I will take care of you. I blame myself for not having looked after you better. I might have kept some of this dreadful misery from you."

"No; not you, Miss Joyce!"

"I could, if I had not been so selfishly wrapped up in my own happiness that I had eyes for nothing that went on around me."

Kathleen suddenly freed herself from Joyce's arm.

"Miss Joyce!" she said, excitedly, "I didn't deserve looking after in those days, and I don't deserve it now. Do you know I used to hate you when you were so happy?—yes, hate you, and all because you were a lady, and young and beautiful, and—and Mr. Ledyard loved you."

"I know, I know; say no more about it," said Joyce hurriedly, feeling that this was the point at which her indulgence for Kathleen failed her.

But Kathleen was bent on saying more. She went on, speaking even more quickly and excitedly than before, as though fearful lest her courage might give way.

"I think I could have killed you if I had had the chance sometimes when you used to come into the room, looking so bright and happy after you had been walking or talking with Mr. Ledyard. Once I tried to kill myself——"

"Kathleen!"

"I did, Miss Joyce; but my courage failed me—a little—little more courage and it would have been done. Then, when I found I could not do that, I made up my mind that I would marry Bryan O'Shea, and get away from you and the sight of your happiness."

Joyce remained silent, steadily looking at the girl. Her memory was busy piecing together by-gone fragments of circumstances which, at the time, had seemed without meaning.

Kathleen misinterpreted her silence. She waited a moment, then went close to Joyce, speaking in slow, quiet tones :

"Miss Joyce, there's one thing I should like to say to you before I go. You must not think Mr. Ledyard knew anything of all this, or that he ever said a word to me that any gentleman might not have said to any poor girl."

The nearest approach to a smile of which Joyce was capable in those sad days, parted her lips, but still she said nothing.

"It all began as it ended, with my own folly," Kathleen went on, as though she

were bent on making a full confession and leaving no dregs of suspicion in Joyce's mind. "I was going home from the village one day—Overbury, I mean—in the winter twilight, and a rough farmer's lad overtook me, and would persist in following and annoying me. Mr. Ledyard happened to be coming from the house and met us. He soon sent the man off, scolded me for being out so late, turned back, and saw me safe home. It was after that I used to say to myself: 'If I had only been a lady he might have married me'; and then it was I took to hating you. Oh! don't you see, Miss Joyce? Pray, pray believe me!" Here she clasped her hands together imploringly. "It was only my own vanity and foolishness, nothing else."

Joyce's ghost of a smile vanished. She looked Kathleen full in the face with clear, solemn eyes.

"Why take the trouble to tell me all this?" she asked quietly. "Do you think if you told me a story exactly the reverse I should believe one syllable of it? Don't you see—don't you understand that nothing anyone could say would ever shake my faith in his truth and honour?"

She seemed to be addressing Kathleen. In reality she felt as though she were saying the words to Frank himself.

While they had been talking the early brightness of the morning had waned; a fresh breeze had risen, black masses of clouds came rolling up from the sea.

Kathleen had grown weather-wise during her brief sojourn on the Irish coast; she picked up Joyce's hat from the ground and handed it to her. "There's a storm coming, Miss Joyce," she said; "you ought to make haste home."

But Joyce did not stir. Mechanically she put on the hat, saying never a word. Her brains ached with the load of thought which Kathleen had put into them. Little by little the facts of that terrible twentieth of December began to piece themselves into the story of plot and crime she had been just listening to. Not a doubt rested in her mind now as to Frank's fate. Following Mab's footsteps, he had gone into the conspirators' meeting-place, and had there met his death. How they had done their work without leaving trace of it behind, was the only mystery to be solved now.

She covered her eyes with her hands, shuddering. She scarcely heard Kathleen's words of farewell as the girl turned towards the churchyard gate.

"Good-bye, Miss Joyce; I must go at once, I have to catch the coach at the other end of the heath. Thank you for listening to me so patiently this morning."

In another instant she was gone, making her way with swift steps across the heath, a small, dark blot between the gloomy stretch of dull purple, and the iron-gray of the lowering sky.

Joyce looked after her between the parted boughs of the scant-leaved trees, trying to gather her wits together. She wished she had not let the girl go so hurriedly; there were questions she would have liked to ask her.

She essayed to call the girl back. "Kathleen!" she cried, leaning over the low stone wall, and beckoning to her with her hand.

But the small, dark figure did not turn its head. The rough, salt breeze threw her voice back at her as it swept down the churchyard path, whirling and hurrying the dry, dead leaves before it.

There fell two large drops of rain on her hand. A white sun for a brief moment cleft the inky mountains of clouds, throwing one long, slanting shaft of light athwart the churchyard. It straggled in and out among the tombs, emphasised the newness of the big stone which marked Buckingham's last resting-place, and found out the tarnished silver of the dead Irishman's watch as it lay among the heather on Mab's grave.

It caught Joyce's eye.

"Poor Ned!" she thought. "He must have meant it for Mab. I will take it home and wear it for both their sakes."

She took it up reverently from the grave. It was a large, heavy thing, and owned to a solid outside case of silver. This showed on one side an ugly, russet-brown stain, which marked the sure course that Bryan's bullet had taken.

And as she stood there looking down on it, with eyes that had long since lost the trick of tears, a sudden thought came to her. What if, by means of this watch, Donovan had meant to send a message to her, which he had not dared to put into words while he lived his uncertain life, with Death for ever dogging his heels?

With trembling fingers she pressed the spring of the outer case. No; there was nothing there save the marks of daily wear and tear. Then she opened the inner lid which covered the mechanism.

The wind swept past with a mighty rush; the rain came down in a great, drenching shower; but Joyce stood still,

heeding neither wind nor rain, for a brief sentence, which fixed her eye, written in blue pencil within the inner lid.

It ran thus :

"Latitude N. 62.32.
Longitude W. 7.10."

TOM'S OUTING.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"It is a very forlorn sort of a world," said little Tom to himself, as he sat on the deserted beach of a fashionable watering-place, disconsolately watching an out-going tide.

A superficial glance would not have confirmed Tom's judgement, for the world was making a most gallant show just then, with the sun high in the heavens, and the sea a tremulous field of azure and silver. Perhaps Tom made deductions from feelings rather than facts, as so many of us do. Certainly he looked forlorn enough himself, with a wisp of his dark hair protruding assertively from his torn straw hat, and the few marine objects he had thought worth collecting escaping from his soiled and tumbled pinafore.

At that moment it would have been difficult to guess that he was anybody's petted darling, or that the anxious interest of at least four persons centred in his small and dirty personality.

Until the last month of his brief life Tom had been an only child, and an only child with half the globe between him and his parents too; but, for all that, he had been a very happy and very well-cared-for little fellow. He lived with an uncle and aunt in a big house in a Manchester suburb, where he had a large, airy nursery and as many delightful things contained therein as the heart of a little boy could desire. And then everyone was very good to him: the servants were all his intimate personal friends; Uncle Teddy did exactly as Tom wished always; while, as regarded Aunt Maria, there certainly never had been anyone in the wide world like her.

Now young as Tom was, he had already discovered that people may be virtuous without being charming. There was Ellen, his nurse, who really had a great genius for story-telling; but Ellen's knuckles were dreadfully hard, and when she dressed or undressed him, her hands were always cold in the winter and hot in summer, when he would have liked them just the opposite.

Now Aunt Maria's hands—oh, they were always right, and everything else about her.

There was one mystery that exercised Tom's imagination a good deal, namely, why Aunt Maria, who loved children, and was so good to him, had not any little boys and girls of her own.

Tom remembered consulting her on the point once, when she had come up in her soft, shining dinner dress, to wish him good night. Aunt Maria had not answered him for a moment; first her cheeks grew very pink, like the geraniums in the window, and the diamond star at her throat gave a quiver or two, and then she said:

"I could not love any baby better than little Tom."

"But father and mother will come for me one day, and then what will you do?" Tom asked, not knowing he was cruel.

"Perhaps they will not take you from me," she said; and then she told Tom the great piece of news, how there was another tiny, tiny baby out in India, and that, perhaps, father and mother would come home that very year, and bring the little brother with them.

At this astounding intelligence Tom said: "Oh-h-h!" his great eyes shining, and then he slid out of Aunt Maria's arms, and raced round and round the room in sheer gladness of heart, his little bare feet twinkling in the fire-light as he ran.

It was after this that Aunt Maria thought that it might be wise to send away Ellen, and get a young lady to look after Tom.

"She will teach you nice manners, and I hope you will do exactly as she tells you, so as to be a perfect little gentleman when father returns."

Tom felt that he would like to be a perfect gentleman before that delightful event, and so, with some tears, he resigned himself to part from Ellen, and to accept Miss Kenwick in her place.

Tom thought Miss Kenwick lovely when he saw her, and he put his finger into his mouth in an access of admiration.

"Take your finger out of your mouth, and say 'How do you do?' prettily," Miss Kenwick said.

And Tom sighed, partly because he felt that his education had begun, and partly because Miss Kenwick's voice disappointed him. The tones were clear and thin, and Tom, who thought Aunt Maria's rather husky voice the perfection of articulation, was disappointed.

Until Miss Kenwick's advent Aunt Maria had thought Tom a very well-mannered baby, because he was loving, and obedient, and naturally polite; but Miss Kenwick saw so much amiss, and spoke so disparagingly of the instructions of the departed Ellen, that Aunt Maria grew dreadfully ashamed.

"But he is such a little fellow," she pleaded deprecatingly—"not yet four years old."

"Lady Pratt always said that a child should be taught deportment from his very cradle," Miss Kenwick answered severely; and Aunt Maria collapsed.

Lady Pratt was Miss Kenwick's former employer; and, though her title was but that of the wife of a civic knight, it sounded just as magnificent as if she had been a Countess, and acted powerfully for the suppression of Aunt Maria.

Miss Kenwick made Aunt Maria dreadfully uncomfortable. There are people who, without being consciously offensive, deprive your home in some subtle way of its perfect peace, when once they have come beneath its roof. But Aunt Maria did not hold Miss Kenwick responsible for this; since she had given Lady Pratt entire satisfaction for three years, it must be her own fault that she could not like her.

Aunt Maria was a soft, loving, motherly woman, who never fussed or scolded, never suppressed others, never obtruded herself. Lovers agreed to meet at Aunt Maria's house; friends who had fallen apart made their mutual complaints to her; and servants, who had neither a situation nor much of a character to fall back upon, often threw themselves on her mercy to get a fresh start. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that she was invariably well served or gratefully regarded in return; but she was one of those happily constituted people who do good-natured things to please themselves, and leave thanks quite out of their reckoning.

But, though Aunt Maria knew she was popular, she knew also that where a competition in beauty or elegance arose, she would be nowhere.

Now Bessie out in India was beautiful. Aunt Maria was the least envious woman in the world, but as often as she thought of Bessie, she sighed. Bessie, with her tall, slim figure; her soft, dark eyes; her ivory skin. Oh yes! Bessie was beautiful, and so she had married Aunt Maria's only brother, and taken him away from the sister who thought there was no one like him in all the world—not even her own

husband, who was so good, and whom she loved with her whole heart.

Aunt Maria was a little afraid of the beautiful Bessie, who was so well connected, and so accomplished, and, therefore, when Miss Kenwick said, "Tom has not been nicely trained, and his mother is sure to think so," Aunt Maria quailed. If Miss Kenwick, who had lived with Lady Pratt and the rest of the aristocracy, thought Tom vulgar, then of course he was vulgar, and what would his mother say when she saw him?

Aunt Maria went up to the nursery with a sinking heart—the big, airy nursery, that had Indian photographs on the walls, and Indian toys strewn the floor; and there was the grey parrot, screaming at Tom, and Tom, astride his rocking-horse, brandishing his tin sword, and shouting at the horse and the parrot equally.

Aunt Maria saw how beautiful the child was, with a red glow in his dusky cheeks, and his thick, dark curls tossed back from his forehead; but she felt at the same time that he was dreadfully noisy, and so, perhaps, if noise be vulgar, Miss Kenwick was right.

For her own part she could not feel as if the child's faults were faults, and, therefore, she could not pretend to sit in judgment. She took him off the rocking-horse and kissed him, and when he got astride her knee and continued his equestrianism, she could only sigh and smile together. Perhaps it was fortunate after all that she had no children of her own, or she might have spoiled them, as Miss Kenwick said she was spoiling little Tom.

Aunt Maria could deny herself; she was a brave woman where it was necessary; and so, when Miss Kenwick said that Tom was not improving because he knew he had always his aunt to appeal to, Aunt Maria made up her mind.

"If you think he would do better under your sole care, I shall send you both to the sea-side for three months," she said. "I am very anxious that his mother should be pleased with him when she sees him."

Miss Kenwick demurred a little. There are people whose instinct is always to say "no" to any proposal; and others who, in minor matters, can never see any reason why they should not say "yes." The latter may be inferior disciplinarians, but certainly they make the more comfortable and successful wives and mothers.

Miss Kenwick believed that a too ready assent would be sure to invalidate her

authority, and so she always said "no" at first, and thought herself very gracious if she reconsidered her decision.

Miss Kenwick declined the responsibility of Tom in the first instance, but admitted later that sea-air would be likely to do him good.

Aunt Maria was quite low-spirited that evening. She had Tom down for dessert, and cried a good deal over him furtively.

"Only that I believe it is for his good, I could not bear to let him go," she said.

"His good! Pooh! Nonsense! The child is all right," Uncle Edward answered, laughing. But then, Uncle Edward was not afraid of Bessie, and thought his own wife as good and as nice as anyone.

"Miss Kenwick has been accustomed to nice children, and knows what is best for Tom, and I want him to please his mother."

"I think he is sure to please her."

"Miss Kenwick says, if she had him all to herself she could teach him to be a little gentleman."

"Miss Kenwick be hanged!" Uncle Edward said angrily. "An impertinent baggage!"

"An impertinent baggage," Tom echoed, emphatically and uncomprehendingly.

"Oh, Edward, you see!" poor Aunt Maria cried in terror; "if he said that before his mother, what would she think?" So it was decreed that Tom and the governess should take their departure coastwards forthwith.

Lykeham is a new-looking, beautifully clean town, with its best houses built in a long terrace facing the sea. In the eyes of Aunt Maria and Uncle Edward it had two advantages. First, they had stopped there once or twice themselves, and knew how clean and healthy it was; secondly, it was within a reasonable distance of the Manchester suburb; and though Aunt Maria had no fixed idea of pouncing down on Miss Kenwick, nor any suspicion that an occasional visit might be of service to Tom, still it was well to have them within reasonable distance. As to expense, that was a matter of no importance whatever where Tom was concerned, and accordingly, he and Miss Kenwick departed for Lykeham, and took up their quarters at the best hotel. Of course, Miss Kenwick meant to go into apartments ultimately, but in the first instance an hotel was convenient, and it was easy to direct her investigations thence.

For a day or two Tom thought every-

thing very satisfactory, for everyone took to him and praised him, and complimented Miss Kenwick so on his beauty that she seemed to think there was a little pride in owning him. Those were the days when he was dressed afresh for every meal, with the gayest of sashes and the costliest of garments, and when the ladies said, "Such a pet, and so foreign-looking," and he strutted about in all the pride of his Oriental antecedents.

But that was before Miss Kenwick met her cousin.

Tom remembered the day on which the cousin came, quite well. He had been down in the drawing-room, and the lady who had a room across the corridor from them had made Tom a present of a picture-book, and had been in the midst of an interesting narrative of a nephew, the age of Tom, who lived in London, when Miss Kenwick had come to take him away and dress him for going out.

She was carrying him down the landing, and he had one arm about her neck, while the other clasped his picture-book, when a gentleman, coming in the opposite direction, met them, and stood aside a little to let them pass. This gentleman wore clothes of a light colour, and he had a long, fair moustache, and little lines about his eyes; and when Miss Kenwick met his glance and blushed, and bowed slightly, he turned and stared after her, stroking his moustache in a bewildered way.

When they were out of doors they met the fair gentleman again; but Miss Kenwick pretended not to see him. Next day, Tom saw him talking to the governess, and after that, somehow, Miss Kenwick was always different from what she had been.

In the following week, Tom and she went to the apartments that had been taken in Sea View Terrace; and then quite a different order of things began.

The fair gentleman called once, but he did not stay long nor take much notice of Tom; and, after that, Miss Kenwick made herself pretty every day, and kept Tom walking up and down the length of the terrace till he was weary.

Sometimes they met the fair gentleman, and sometimes they did not; and when they met him, sometimes he stopped to speak, and sometimes he only bowed. When he stopped, Miss Kenwick was amiable for all the rest of the evening; and when he only bowed, Miss Kenwick was

cross, and sometimes slapped Tom, though he did not know why.

"What makes you always come out to meet the fair gentleman?" Tom asked once.

"I don't," Miss Kenwick answered, flushing; "and you are a rude boy."

"Why am I a rude boy?"

"To notice when I meet my cousin."

"Is he your cousin?"

"Of course he is."

"Is he not kind?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you did not speak to him the first day you saw him."

Miss Kenwick told Tom he was tiresome and naughty, and took him home; and after that she always committed him to the care of Miss Parkinson, and went abroad alone.

Miss Parkinson was not very young. Tom thought she was very old, and once complimented her on all she must have seen; and she wore voluminous draperies that rustled a good deal when she moved, and at the left side of her head she had a single long curl, which Tom thought very wonderful. She was a busy little woman, with as many duties in each day as could possibly be squeezed into it; but, for all that, she found time to pity little Tom.

"Poor forlorn child!" she used to say, when she found him shut into the back parlour, day after day, with the same wearisome box of bricks for his sole amusement, "if your people only knew!"

But they did not know, and it was not Miss Parkinson's business to tell them.

There were no children among Miss Parkinson's boarders at that time, except Tom himself; but, pitying him as she did, the good little woman made it her business to seek out a former client, who lived further up the street now, and to introduce Tom.

"He is as good and nice a little fellow as ever was," she said, looking down on the child, who was resplendent in all the finery she could find for him, "and he is all alone here with a governess, who is young and giddy; and so I thought, as Miss Fanny is an only child too, that perhaps you would let her come and play with him sometimes."

Mrs. Orpenshaw, a faded lady, who habitually wore easy-fitting garments, and lay on the sofa, signified her assent; and Miss Fanny—a precocious person of nine, who had been surveying Tom critically, and had discovered that his sash was an

inch broader than her very best, and that his pelisse had the loveliest buttons on it that she had ever seen—Miss Fanny graciously signified that she would call for Tom sometimes, and, as she kept her word, Tom's happy days returned.

CHAPTER II.

THERE never was such a companion as Fanny. Tom would have maintained that against all comers; and even when she transferred her favours and cut him dead, he was too young and too honest to go back on his judgement.

It was hard that she preferred the big, freckled boy to him; but making a bad choice did not detract from her personal fascinations, and, however unkind she had proved, her favour had brought him one advantage—liberty.

He had got into the habit of meeting her on the beach, and, as she always brought him home safely, Miss Parkinson relaxed her surveillance, so that he could take his hat unchallenged and go out alone.

At first, after Fanny's estrangement, he had found it good enough fun to sit and watch how the fickle fair one comported herself with his rival; but when the games they played were full of laughter, he found their nearness tantalising. To see nice things and never to share them, to hear mirth without ever making it, would test the resolution of a more advanced philosopher than baby Tom. For his part he was learning to think that the world was not such a very nice place as he had fancied.

He would have liked to play with other children, if only to show Fanny that he did not miss her so very much; but he was such a baby, and so forsaken-looking, that no one encouraged his advances.

So he lay on the beach, thinking about nothing in particular, and there was a pain at his heart. On an impulse, he had taken off his shoes and stockings, thinking to paddle in the surf, but his attention had been diverted, and, before he thought of the matter again, the sea had receded so far, that Tom determined not to follow it. He tried to think of India; but he could not remember what to think about it; and then of Aunt Maria. Ah, it was easy enough to think of her. Tom felt he had so much to say to her that he was sure he could write her a letter. He would get a sheet of paper and a pen

from Miss Parkinson, and he would say, "I love you, I love you," so often to himself, as he wrote, that his meaning would be sure to spread itself all over the paper. And then Miss Parkinson would address the letter for him, and see that it went all right. Miss Parkinson was very kind.

Armed with this resolution he rose to go home, seeking his belongings first of all, but, do as he would, he could only find one shoe and one stocking. The others had disappeared, swallowed up by the sand, perhaps; lost at any rate.

Tom was a very just little fellow, and what remained to him he resolved to divide fairly, so he put a stocking on one foot and a shoe on the other, and started homeward valiantly. But the way seemed unusually long, and the shoeless foot came in contact with many painful things, and the world seemed a more comfortless place than ever.

It was not any particular love for Miss Kenwick, but just relief at sight of any face he knew, that made him rush towards the governess, and throw his arms round her, and hide his hot little face in her crisp skirts.

Miss Kenwick was charmingly dressed, and was looking very happy and very sweet, for she had just caught sight of the fair gentleman in the distance, and he seemed coming towards her, when lo! all her pleasant fancies were banished and herself rendered ridiculous by the advent of a dilapidated and dirty child, who took possession of her.

Miss Kenwick was wroth, but had to make the best of her trying circumstances by turning homeward, and telling Tom to follow her slowly.

"How came you in such a plight?" she asked, shaking her pupil, when he and she were within doors. "I thought you always went with Fanny Orpenshaw, and she is a nice little girl, and would never lead you into such a state."

"Fanny does not play with me now."

"And no wonder, you dirty boy."

"I wasn't dirty when I played with her — 'tisn't that."

"Then what is it?"

"Fanny says my papa is not a gentleman."

"What does she know about your papa, I should like to know?"

"I told her papa was a civil servant out in India, and then she would not play with me. She said her mamma would not allow her to know a servant's child."

"Just as if she could know what the

Civil Service is, and her father an upholsterer!" Miss Kenwick said, turning up her nose at the whole family of Orpenshaw.

"She said he was less of a gentleman for being civil; if he had been a rude servant it would have shown he did not like it."

"Impertinent little goose!"

"Impertinent baggage," Tom amended sapiently.

"That is a naughty word; where did you hear it?"

"From Uncle Teddy. Uncle Teddy said you were an impertinent baggage."

"He did!" Miss Kenwick was deeply wounded. She had been growing valorous in Tom's behalf, had been putting herself on the side of her pupil's family and against all slanderers, and this was her reward! She grew crimson, and tears of mortification sprang into her eyes.

"I suppose we cannot expect better when we are dependent and defenceless," she said, more to herself than to Tom. "But it is rudeness like that that makes one so grateful for courtesy."

She did not go out that evening, but she did not play with Tom or notice him, only sat gazing despondently from the window, and that was not much more cheerful than solitude.

Miss Kenwick had fallen in love, deeply and hopelessly, and certainly without much undue encouragement. On the occasion when she told Tom that the fair gentleman was her cousin it is to be feared that she was not absolutely veracious, for he was no less a person than the Honourable Bertie Hunter, son of the late Lord Glenlyon, and brother of a live Earl. It had been the Honourable Bertie's whim once to be on visiting terms at the house of Sir Giles Pratt, and there he had seen Miss Kenwick, and had been civil to her, as it was his way to be to every woman under the sun.

The Honourable Bertie was very handsome, and very good-natured, and honest and upright according to his lights; indeed, neither friends nor foes, had he possessed the latter, could have found a fault in him, save that one of which he was himself so overwhelmingly conscious — his impecuniosity.

And the worst of it was that his facilities for curing himself of the latter disease were so very limited. He was not in trade, and so could not make any grand coup; he had no capital wherewith to speculate, and make or lose a fortune on the Stock Exchange.

The Honourable Bertie had but a solitary chance of bettering his condition, namely, matrimony. That he would throw away that chance was a possibility which had never suggested itself to him; but as a fixed resolution regarding the disposal of his person does not deprive a man of soft blue eyes, a charming manner, and a general desire to make himself agreeable, it had happened half-a-dozen times already that the Honourable Bertie had wrought havoc in the female breast which he neither desired nor intended.

The Honourable Bertie's affections were not at this time actually disposed of, but to a certain extent they were out of his own keeping.

When an impecunious gentleman fixes his desires on a lady with a large income, onlookers are wont to surmise that her golden attraction is the most powerful one, but in Bertie Hunter's case this surmise would have been incorrect. Certainly, had Miss Bonanza been penniless it would have been impossible for him to have wooed her, however dear and desirable she seemed; but having a million dollars in her own right hampered him just as much on the other side. He honestly loved her, and, though the money in itself might not be a disadvantage, he realised very well how materially it narrowed his chances. She was not a fool, and Miss Bonanza being a great heiress would likely find a worthier suitor, though not one who would love her more—of that he was morally certain.

As yet he had not uttered the momentous question, but he had done everything short of that, and on the whole he was not unhopeful. Pending further developments he had come to Lykeham, to rest and recruit his energies. And this was the man whom Miss Kenwick was breaking her heart about, and squandering even her self-respect to fascinate.

The Honourable Bertie was not blind to Miss Kenwick's state of mind, but he was neither flattered nor amused by it. It was not his fault that he looked admiring where he felt no particular admiration, and sometimes he regarded his good looks as a misfortune. Certainly, if it invited the tenderness of every girl that he dined with at a table d'hôte, it was a thorough nuisance.

If Miss Kenwick had belonged to his own particular world he would have felt no compunction in snubbing her periodically, but in the case of a poor little gover-

ness the thing was impossible. So he had called on her when she asked him; was invariably courteous to her when she intercepted him in the street; and acquired, with a daily increasing sense of discomfort, the consciousness that she was rendering him ridiculous.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

THERE never has been a great crisis in the fate of any nation, where a Man has not arisen to deal with it. We shall search history in vain for anything more terrible and momentous than the long and bloody struggle between the Northern and the Southern States of America; and we shall also search in vain for more remarkable instances than this war afforded of the truth of our proposition. Within an incredibly short time, the necessities of the occasion created one of the most brilliant soldiers of our generation out of a tanner's clerk, and one of the most able statesmen who ever guided a nation out of trouble out of a Western rail-splitter.

It is just about a year since the Autobiography of General Grant gave the world a complete record of the military operations, and now two notable publications are giving us much light upon the life and political career of President Lincoln. The biography, by his two private secretaries, of which the opening chapters have appeared in the Century Magazine, promises to be exceedingly minute and careful, and possibly may be too much in detail to attract the rapid reader. But Mr. Allen Thorndike Dice, the editor of the North American Review, has collected and published a volume of reminiscences of "Old Abe," as he was popularly called, which is full of interest. These reminiscences are contributed by some thirty-three gentlemen of various rank and fame in the United States, men who knew and met Lincoln, and had something to relate of his personality, his career, or his government. And there is nothing more remarkable in this volume, than the unanimity with which nearly three dozen writers of most diverse minds and opinions agree in presenting Lincoln as a simple, "plain man of the people," it is true, but also as the embodiment of honour, of tender humanity, and of the highest patriotism. Our object in the present paper is to illustrate these traits in the character of a man who has been often maligned and misunderstood.

It is very common with English people to suppose that the Civil War in the United States was directly upon the question whether slavery should be retained or abolished. The abolition of slavery was a consequence of the war, but was not the literal consequence of it. This is how General Grant states the case in his "Memoirs :"

"In the case of the war between the States, it would have been the exact truth if the South had said: 'We do not want to live with you Northern people any longer; we know our institution of slavery is obnoxious to you, and, as you are growing numerically stronger than we, it may at some time in the future be endangered. So long as you permitted us to control the Government, and, with the aid of a few friends at the North, to enact laws constituting your section a guard against the escape of our property, we were willing to live with you. You have been submissive to our rule heretofore; but it looks now as if you did not intend to continue so, and we will remain in the Union no longer.' Instead of this, the seceding States cried lustily: 'Let us alone; you have no constitutional power to interfere with us.' Newspapers and people at the North reiterated the cry. Individuals might ignore the constitution; but the nation itself must not only obey it, but must enforce the strictest construction of that instrument; the construction put upon it by the Southerners themselves. The fact is, the constitution did not apply to any such contingency as the one existing from 1861 to 1865. Its framers never dreamed of such a contingency occurring. If they had foreseen it, the probabilities are they would have sanctioned the right of a State or States to withdraw, rather than that there should be war between brothers."

And now, as to Abraham Lincoln, we find Mr. Dice recording of him that he was, as President, pre-eminently a democratic ruler, who profoundly believed in a Government of the people, by the people, and for the people; and who, however earnest his wish, as a man, to promote and enact justice between classes and races, "never went faster or further than to enforce the will of the people that elected him."

"He was," continues Mr. Dice, "elected to save the Union, not to destroy slavery; and he did not aid, directly or indirectly, the movement to abolish slavery until the voice of the people was heard demanding it in order that the Union might be saved."

He did not free the negro for the sake of the slave, but for the sake of the Union."

We think it necessary to introduce this explanation here, because it is very usual to class Lincoln with the avowed Abolitionists. Lincoln has the immortal distinction of having proclaimed the emancipation of the slaves in North America; but "he signed the proclamation of emancipation solely because it had become impossible to restore the Union with slavery."

But it would not be fair to leave this subject without repeating a story of 1831, told by John Hanks, who was Lincoln's companion upon a flat-boat on the Mississippi, on board of which both laboured for a time. They made a trip in the boat to New Orleans, and there, says Hanks, "we saw negroes chained, maltreated, whipped, and scourged. Lincoln saw it; said nothing much; was silent from feeling; was sad; looked bad; felt bad; was thoughtful and abstracted. I can say, knowing it, that it was on this trip that he formed his opinion about slavery. It run its iron in him then and there, May, 1831. I have heard him say so often and often."

Twenty years later Lincoln said: "The time will come when we must be all Democrats and Abolitionists. When that time comes, my mind is made up. The slavery question can't be compromised."

Five years later again (1855) he said: "As a nation we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but we are degenerating, for now we practically read it—all men are created equal, except negroes."

Later again he said: "I hate slavery because of its monstrous injustice;" and so we might go on tracing the growing strength of his convictions, until the period arrived at which military and political necessity converged with justice and humanity, and, in September, 1862, he issued the first famous Proclamation of Emancipation.

"I can remember," Lincoln once told Mr. Leonard Swett, "our life in Kentucky. The cabin, the stinted living, the sale of our possessions, and the journey with my father and mother to Southern Indiana." He was six years old then; but better fortune did not follow these early pioneers in a then new country. Soon after arriving in Indiana the mother died. Then, "it was pretty pinching times at first, getting the cabin built and the clearing for the crops; but presently we got reasonably comfortable, and my father married again."

The stepmother seems to have been an excellent woman, and Messrs. Nicolay and

Hay, in their biography, record a good deal that is interesting about this period of Lincoln's life. He had only been six months at school when his father was "cleaned out," through having to pay a bill which he had endorsed for a friend. Abe had to "go and hire himself out," that the produce of his labour might help the family funds. He was never at school again, and what further education he gained was in reading "all the books he ever heard of in the country for a circuit of fifty miles."

When he was nineteen the family migrated to Illinois, and shortly afterwards Abraham left home with all his worldly possessions tied up in a handkerchief slung over his shoulder. And thus, as he has himself related, with his father's and his stepmother's blessing, he started "upon the wonderful journey of life."

Tramping over the prairies along an old Indian trail, he reached Macon County, where he found some cousins called Hanks, with whom he engaged in "splitting rails" at so much per hundred. Then he drifted into a fresh neighbourhood, and took employment under a farmer. While working in Langamon County he was struck with the difficulty the farmers had in getting their produce to market, and he conceived the idea of building a flat boat upon the Langamon river, running it down thence into the Illinois, thence into the Mississippi, and so to New Orleans. He also devised a method of surmounting a dam, which formed an obstacle in this long waterway. He felled the timber, built the boat, loaded it, and went in charge of it as "Captain," with a crew of two men, one of them being Hanks. Two or three years Lincoln worked in this boat, and then he became "clerk" in a store in the town of New Salem, in Langamon County, in which was sold "a very few goods of various kinds."

He shortly became a partner in this concern, but soon left again, in consequence of a dispute about whisky. The old proprietor wanted to keep a cask to "invite custom," but Lincoln wouldn't have it. "He told me," writes Mr. Leonard Swett, "not more than a year before he was elected President, that he had never tasted liquor in his life."

"What," I said, "do you mean to say you never tasted it?"

"Yes, I never tasted it."

The result was that Lincoln dissolved the partnership, the partner taking all the goods and agreeing to pay all the debts.

But instead of paying the debts he took to drink, and when Lincoln came back to the place, after serving as Captain of a company of volunteers in an expedition against the Indians, he found that he was liable for some eleven hundred dollars.

"I cannot forget," says Mr. Swett, "his face of seriousness as he turned to me and said: 'That debt was the greatest obstacle I have ever met in life. I had no way of speculating, and could not earn money except by labour; and to earn by labour eleven hundred dollars, besides my living, seemed the work of a lifetime. There was, however, but one way. I went to the creditors, and told them if they would let me alone, I would give them all I could earn over my living as fast as I could earn it.'" And by hard work and economy he paid it off in the course of a few years.

Fate was kind to him, for about this time he got employment in the county surveyor's office, and four years later was elected member of the State legislature. This meant at that time four dollars a day of allowance, "and four dollars a day," said Lincoln, "was more than I had ever earned in my life before."

This was the beginning of his political career, for in the Illinois legislature his natural gift for public speaking developed itself, and what we may call his education in public affairs rapidly advanced. Of other education Mr. Swett says, "Life was to him a school, and he was always studying and mastering every subject which came before him. He knew how to dig out any question from its very roots, and when his own children began to go to school, he studied with them, and acquired in mature life the elements of an education. I have seen him myself upon the circuit, with 'a geometry' or 'an astronomy,' or some book of that kind, working out propositions in moments of leisure, or acquiring the information that is generally acquired in boyhood."

After serving his term in the State legislature, Lincoln went to Springfield and began to study law. He rose in this new profession, we are told, with great rapidity, and soon became a leader in it. He also became a leader of the Whig, afterwards the Republican, party, and he distinguished himself in a great public debate on the slavery question, with Stephen A. Douglas, a great Democrat leader and prominent politician. It was while practising as a lawyer at Springfield that Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States.

But of his early days, Mr. Swett insists that Lincoln told the story as of a happy childhood. "There was nothing sad nor pinched, and nothing of want, and no allusions to want in any part of it. His own description of his youth was that of a joyous, happy boyhood. It was told with mirth and glee, and illustrated by pointed anecdote, often interrupted by his jocund laugh, which echoed over the prairies. His biographers have given to his early life the spirit of suffering and want, and as one reads them he feels like tossing him pennies for his relief. Mr. Lincoln gave no such description, nor is such description true. His was just such a life as has always existed and now exists in the frontier States, and such boys are not suffering, but are like Whittier's 'barefoot boy with cheeks of tan.'"

Maybe so, but judging from the pictures of his early homes, and the details recorded by others, one cannot but feel that it was a hard life all the same.

At any rate he was, by birth, education, experience, and sympathy, one of "the plain people," and he never lost the faculty of reading the mind of "the plain people." To this he owed his local popularity, as well as his greater influence at the White House. And Mr. T. J. Coffey (another of the contributors to the volume of "Reminiscences") is probably right in questioning whether his career as President and Emancipator, or even his tragic death, would have excited and kept alive the affectionate and ever-increasing interest in his character, if that character had been less marked with quaint, original, and homely traits that appealed to the common heart of "the plain people." As has been often said of him, "his heart lay close to the great popular heart, and felt its beatings."

Strangely unlovely, too, he was in personal appearance. Over six feet four inches in height, his limbs seemed hooked on to his gaunt frame anyhow, while enormous feet formed the extremities of long, thin legs. Mr. Washburne describes him as he first saw him in Springfield in 1847: "Tall, angular and awkward, he had on a short-waisted, thin swallow-tail coat; a short vest of same material; thin pantaloons, scarcely coming down to his ankles; a straw hat; and a pair of brogans, with woollen socks."

Mr. Poore thus describes him at the White House: "In the morning and after dinner he used to wear a long-skirted, faded dressing-gown, belted around the

waist, and slippers. His favourite attitude when listening—and he was a good listener—was to lean forward and clasp his left knee with both hands, as if fondling it, and his face would then wear a sad, wearied look. But when the time came for him to give an opinion on what he had heard, or to tell a story, which something said reminded him of, his face would lighten up with its homely, rugged smile, and he would run his fingers through his bristly, black hair, which would stand up in every direction, like that of an electric-experiment doll." He was, in fact, as is set down with almost one consent, a very ugly man, with coarse features, a dull and heavy face in repose, and a general uncomely appearance. But when enlivened in conversation his aspect altered, and as Vice-President Colfax says: "when sympathy and mercy lightened up those rugged features, many a wife and mother, pleading for his intervention, had indeed reason to think him handsome."

He seems to have been eminently humane and tender-hearted, and exercised his prerogative of pardon while President so freely and frequently as greatly to annoy his Generals, and even to jeopardise the discipline of the army. But the cause did not lose by his humanity.

General Frederick Douglass, a "coloured" man, gives an interesting account of his first visit—indeed, the first visit of any "coloured man"—to the White House: "When I entered he was seated in a low chair, surrounded by a multitude of books and papers, his feet and legs were extended in front of his chair. On my approach he slowly drew his feet in from the different parts of the room into which they had strayed, and he began to rise, and continued to rise until he looked down on me, and extended his hand and gave me a welcome. He was the first great man that I talked with in the United States who in no single instance reminded me of the difference between himself and myself—of the difference of colour—and I thought that all the more remarkable because he came from a State where there were black slaves. I felt in his presence that I was in the presence of a great man, as great as the greatest, and yet that I could go and put my hand on him if I wanted to—to put my hand on his shoulder. Of course, I did not do it, but I felt that I could. I felt as though I was in the presence of a big brother, and that there was safety in his atmosphere."

This is interesting testimony from such a source, and along with it we may take the summation of argument in favour of liberation, which Lincoln once used to Mr. Cassius M. Clay: "Clay, I always thought that the man who made the corn should eat the corn."

Joshua Speed, a storekeeper in Springfield, Illinois, tells how one day "an awkward, green stranger of great stature and as much diffidence" came into his place, and priced some household articles. After making a selection and learning the sum total, the stranger turned sadly away, and said it was more money than he had. Speed, learning that he was coming to commence practice in Springfield, offered to give him credit; but Lincoln steadily refused to take credit, although he afterwards accepted an offer to share Speed's bed until his own circumstances improved. And for many years he continued to sleep with Speed, who thus, having had exceptional opportunities of seeing his character on all sides, has recorded that he had found him "humane, philanthropic, and eminently the most just man he ever knew, and that he well deserved of all men the name of 'Honest Abe.'"

Apropos of this time, a story is told of a case in which Lincoln was engaged in the court of the county. The weather was warm, and after the primitive manners of frontier courts, the opposing lawyer had taken off his coat and vest as he grew heated in the argument. The disrobing revealed the fact that the lawyer buttoned his shirt at the back—a practice, it seems, not then so common as it became in America. This lawyer had the best of the case in point of law, but Lincoln adroitly worked upon the prejudices of a primitive people against "pretensions" of a social kind. Answering, he said: "Gentlemen of the jury, having justice on my side, I don't think you will be at all influenced by the gentleman's pretended knowledge of the law, when you see that he doesn't even know which side of his shirt should be in front!" He gained both a laugh and the case.

It is pleasant in one sense, although rather opposed to British conceptions of the fitness of things, to learn that when he became President, Lincoln wrote to his old Springfield "chum," Speed, and offered him any office he liked to take. Speed declined, saying that his business was now better than any office the President could give; but Speed's brother was some time afterwards made Attorney-General.

The deep sadness of Lincoln's facial expression is repeatedly referred to by these various commentators. It struck everybody and seemed chronic, but yet many insist that it was no real index of the operation of his mind. That he felt the terrible burden of his responsibility as President during the war is abundantly evident, and had he not been a giant in physique as well as in brain, he must have sunk under it. But his sense of humour was large and constant, and his indulgence in anecdote seems to have been his unfailing relaxation. Senators and ministers were frequently shocked at his apparent levity, when he would break off in some serious discussion, at a grave crisis in the affairs of the nation, to tell a story. But these stories were his safety-valve, and it is now contended that had he not been able to relieve his brain in this way, he must have become insane. Every man must have an outlet of some sort; story-telling was Lincoln's.

Much has been said of Lincoln's stories and of his inimitable gift as a story-teller, but we must confess that the specimens given in the volume to which we have referred are somewhat disappointing. One cannot always see so much humour in them as his listeners seem to have discovered, but yet we are told that the merit of Lincoln's stories was less in the matter of them than in their appositeness, as illustrative in argument or reply. The story-telling habit seems to have been acquired in his Springfield days, when the lawyers going on "circuit," and putting up in primitive villages, had no books or other resources but the companionship of each other. There was then a constant succession of anecdotes in the evenings—not always of the most refined type we may be sure, and indeed we are told that most of Lincoln's best tales were too "racy" for publication. But we must remember that he was a "Western" man, and carried his Western manners with him to the end.

There is a very characteristic story of him in connection with the Battle of Fredericksburg. The news of it was taken by Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania, to Lincoln, who listened to the graphic description of the scenes of what Governor Curtin said "was not a battle, it was a butchery."

Lincoln was heart-broken at the recital, and reached a state of nervous excitement bordering on insanity. The Governor was much affected at the President's sorrow, and, as he was leaving the room, said:

"Mr. President, I am deeply touched at your sorrow and at the distress I have caused. I have only answered your questions. No doubt my impressions have been coloured by the sufferings I have seen. I trust matters will look brighter when the official reports come in. I would give all I possess to know how to rescue you from this terrible war."

Lincoln's whole aspect suddenly changed, and he replied: "That reminds me, Governor, of a story of an old farmer in Illinois that I used to know. He took it into his head to go into hog-raising, and he had the finest breed money could buy. The prize hog was put in a pen, and the farmer's two boys, James and John, were told to be sure not to let him out. But James did let the brute out, and the hog went straight for the boys, and drove John up a tree. Then the hog went for the seat of James's trousers, and the only way the boy could save himself was by holding on to the hog's tail. The hog wouldn't give up his hunt nor the boy his hold. After they had made a good many circles around the tree the boy's courage began to give out, and he shouted to his brother: 'I say, John, come down quick and help me let this hog go!' Now, Governor, that is exactly my case. I wish someone would come and help me let this hog go!"

For Generals Grant and Sherman he had always the kindest feeling, and the reason was, as he told Sherman after the war: "You never found fault with me, from the days of Vicksburg down."

Everyone else seemed to have considered it his duty to criticise and even reprimand the President's policy, the while he was weighed down with the anxiety of his position. One day he said to General Schenck, placing his hands on the General's knee and speaking with great emotion: "You have little idea of the terrible weight of care and sense of responsibility of this office of mine. Schenck, if to be at the head of hell is as hard as what I have to undergo, I could find it in my heart to pity Satan himself!"

It was only his strong sense of humour that enabled him to secure reaction from the awful depression of his position.

Whenever he heard a "good story," Lincoln took a memorandum of it, and he has been even known to delay a few thousand visitors at a levee at the White House, while he called someone aside to tell over again a yarn, the point of which he had not quite caught at the first recital. Thus he

kept up an inexhaustible supply, and had an endless stock to utilise in illustration, into the telling of which he entered with thorough enjoyment.

"When he told a particularly good story," writes one, "and the time came to laugh, he would sometimes throw his left foot across his right knee, and, clenching his foot with both hands and bending forward, his whole frame seemed to be convulsed with the effort to give expression to his sensations."

It has been sometimes said that Lincoln was ruled by his Cabinet, but this is abundantly shown to be a mistake by the numerous writers in Mr. Dice's collection. When it was necessary to exert his will, he did it, and no one dared to oppose. But Mr. Stanton, who was Secretary for War, and a very able and patriotic man, was allowed very much to have his own way. One day a deputation of Western men waited on the President, and obtained from him an order for a certain exchange of soldiers. Going with this order to Secretary Stanton, the mouthpiece of the deputation, Mr. Lovejoy, was met with a flat refusal to execute it.

"But we have the President's order," said Lovejoy.

"Did Lincoln give you an order of that kind?"

"He did, sir."

"Then he's a fool," said the angry Secretary.

"Do you mean to say the President is a fool, sir?" asked the astonished Lovejoy.

"Yes, sir, if he gave you such an order as that."

Back went Lovejoy to the President, and told him all about it.

"Did Stanton say I was a fool?" asked Lincoln.

"He did, sir, and repeated it."

"If Stanton said I was a fool, then I must be one, for he is nearly always right and generally means what he says. I will step over and see him."

Just before the surrender of General Lee, Grant told Lincoln that the war must now soon come to an end, and wanted to know whether he should try to capture Jeff Davis, or allow him to escape from the country.

Lincoln in reply told him the story of an Irishman, who had "taken the pledge" of Father Mathew. This Irishman became terribly thirsty, and applied to a bartender for a lemonade, and while it was being prepared, whispered confidentially: "And couldn't ye put a little brandy in it all unbeknown to meself?"

The application was, that if Grant could let Jeff Davis escape "all unbeknown to meself," to let him go—Lincoln didn't want him.

He used to tell of his own experience in drilling his company for the Indian expedition above mentioned. One day, he said, he was marching twenty men in line across a field, and desired to pass through a gateway into the next enclosure. "I could not for the life of me remember the word of command for getting my company endwise so that it could get through the gate, so as we came near it I shouted: 'This company is dismissed for two minutes, when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate!' And he would add: 'I sometimes think the gentlemen in the House who get into a tight place in debate, would like to dismiss the House until the next day, and then take a fair start.'"

Here is a story of how he disposed of a deputation of senators, who came to ask him one day to dismiss the whole Cabinet and reconstruct it, because General Cameron had retired from the War Office.

"Gentlemen, the request for a change of the whole Cabinet because I have made one change, reminds me of a story I once heard in Illinois, of a farmer who was much troubled with skunks. They annoyed the household at night, and his wife insisted that he should take measures to get rid of them. So one moonlight night he loaded his old shot-gun, and stationed himself in the yard to watch for the intruders. After some time the wife heard the gun go off, and in a few minutes the man re-entered the house. 'What luck had you?' said she. 'I hid myself behind the old wood-pile,' said he, 'with the shot-gun pointed toward the hen-coop, and before long there appeared, not one skunk, but seven. I took aim, blazed away, killed one, and he raised such a fearful smell, that I concluded it was best to let the other six go!'"

The senators laughed and retired, and nothing more was heard of Cabinet reconstruction.

Again, once three men badgered him fearfully for office, and, after coming time after time, came one day when he was very busily and anxiously engaged. They had grown insolent, and, in not very polite terms, now demanded a final reply to their applications. Lincoln, after listening quietly to their tirade, replied, with a twinkle in his eye: "You three

gentlemen remind me of a story I once heard of a poor little boy out West, who had lost his mother. His father wanted to give him a religious education, and placed him in the family of a clergyman. Every day the boy was required to commit to memory and recite one chapter of the Bible. Things proceeded smoothly until they reached the chapter which details the story of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. The boy got on well until he was asked to repeat these three names, but he had forgotten them. His teacher told him he must learn them, and gave him another day to do so. Next day the boy again forgot them. 'Now,' said the teacher, 'you have again failed to remember those names, and you can go no further till you have learned them. I will give you another day on this lesson, and, if you don't repeat the names, I will punish you.' A third time the boy came and got to the stumbling-block, when the clergyman said: 'Now, tell me the names of the men in the fiery furnace.' 'Oh,' said the boy, 'here come those three bores again! I wish the devil had them!'" And thus were the three unfortunate "patriots" disposed of.

He was annoyed from the very beginning of his Presidentship with the persistent crowd of office-seekers, and he exclaimed once: "I seem like a man so busy letting rooms at one end of his house, that he has no time left to put out the fire that is blazing and destroying at the other end." And once, when he was ill with small-pox at the White House, he said to his attendants: "Tell all the office-seekers to come at once, for now I have something I can give to all of them."

Once, after signing a pardon for the son of a constituent who had been sentenced to be shot for desertion, he said: "Some of my Generals complain that I impair discipline by my frequent pardons and reprieves; but it rests me, after a hard day's work, that I can find some excuse for saving some poor fellow's life, and I shall go to bed happy to-night, as I think how joyous the signature of this name will make himself, his family, and his friends."

Endless are the stories of his clemency, and if in reading them we cannot always think his interference judicious, it was at least always magnanimous.

But here we must leave our reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln—surely, with all his roughness, his angularity, his quaintness, and his coarseness, the most remarkable figure on the canvas of American

history—perhaps it is not too much to say, one of the most remarkable figures in all history. He was not a hero, as the world accounts heroism, but he was a strong-brained, upright, far-seeing, shrewd, and eminently sympathetic man, who displayed at a great crisis an amazing tact, and a wonderful power such as no man had dreamed him capable of. One can best realise what Abraham Lincoln was and did, if we can speculate on the possibilities of what would have happened had a weaker, a less prudent, and a less honest man held the reins instead of him. With a sympathetic nature which earned for him the title of "Father Abraham," he had a perfect and ever present sense of justice, an unimpeachable integrity, and a stainless ambition. He was ugly, rough, and coarse in manner and person, but he was, as has been truly said, "a thoroughly genuine man; he was human in the best and highest sense of the word." To the average American of to-day, George Washington is little more, perhaps, than a "steel engraving," but Abraham Lincoln is a living and abiding personality.

JANE COSSENTINE.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

THE days that followed were fully as bitter as Jane had foreseen. Susan, with solemn and sorrowful impressiveness, told the story wherever she went, and her veracity was above suspicion. She described her visit to Jane's mother, and the warning she had delivered, and the unfriendly spirit in which her friendly words had been received; she was eloquent in expressing her sorrow for Jane, and more eloquent in bemoaning Mrs. Cossentine's faith in Jane, and the sad awakening yet in store for her. She was loth, she said, to speak ill of any girl, and it went to her heart to think ill of a daughter of Anne Cossentine. And her sympathy for the offender, and the reluctance with which she told the story, seemed, somehow, to give a double significance to her words.

The story grew as it passed from mouth to mouth, and old friends looked askance at Jane, and their daughters ceased to come to the farm.

Jane, it was observed, had an air of guilt. Her lips were rigid, her face had no light or colour, her eyes avoided the

glances of those whom she met; it was as though she expected to be shunned, and, therefore, made no advances. She had an air of guilt, but not an air of humility and penitence. She held herself upright, stepped firmly, and looked coldly before her, as though she had hardened herself to the estrangement of friends, and was almost indifferent to the change.

By-and-by Jane's father was awakened to the gossip of the village. Some friendly neighbour, in honest fashion, gave him a piece of advice—advised him "to look after his maids a bit;" and told him, with a kindly softening of details, the story of the meetings in the wood.

"Maids be thoughtless," he said. "I told the wife I'd drop a word when I happened to come across 'ee; 'tis what I'd be glad o' anyone to do if 'twas one o' my own—Polly or Bessy, maybe. They'm heedless, an' they want pullin' up now an' then, that's about it; but folks is fond o' findin' somethin' to buzz about, an' the women, if they get together, 'll make a mountain out o' every molehill. I thought I'd drop a word, but I wouldn't be hard on the maid."

But the farmer was hard. He was a kindly, easy-going man, with a simple, clearly-defined standard of right conduct, and a predisposition to believe in the honesty and single-heartedness of everyone about him. It was not often that he was moved to severity, but his anger, when once it was roused, was righteous, and fell scathingly on the offender; it admitted no extenuating circumstances, it frowned down excuses, and nothing that the transgressor might do ever induced the farmer to forget or pardon the transgression. Jane had deceived him, and he did not spare her.

She admitted that she had met Mr. Cholmondeley; why she had met him she refused to explain. Her father's anger seemed to hang like a great shadow over the house; Dora went about silent and frightened; her mother wept and sighed, and sat listlessly over her work, and looked up anxiously when her husband came in, and watched him deprecatingly when he addressed Jane.

The days dragged slowly into weeks, and the weeks went wearily by, until Christmas and Mark appeared. And with Mark came the full bitterness of Jane's sacrifice. All through the long weeks that had preceded Mark's visit, she had wondered how she would bear to see him

again, and to see him change; to know that he too had heard the village news, to see him look at her with the questioning, mistrustful glance with which others were regarding her, and to be silent through it all. She had wondered how much he would regret his shaken faith. His faith in her had been so perfect—even when he had loved Dora best it was she, Jane, in whom he had most believed. Would he correct his old opinion, and regret his old friendship, and smile at himself for having thought her good, or would he scarcely find time to care much, only thinking of Dora, and rejoicing to find her true? But Mark surprised her. He was not immediately credulous; the story puzzled and troubled, but did not convince him, and his remnant of faith in her seemed worse than all things else to bear. It made her desire with passionate intensity to justify his faith, to keep it.

Wherever Jane went, she was conscious of Mark's eyes following her with a ruminating, puzzled glance. He attended when she spoke. He waited for some chance word that should offer a natural explanation of the garbled, foolish story that everyone was telling. When the days went on and no explanation came, it seemed to Jane that his glance grew graver and more searching—that his faith was wavering.

It was a day or two after Christmas, and Mark had met Jane returning alone from some errand to the village. In a somewhat purposeless way he turned and joined her. He talked a good deal as they walked on together, telling her briefly of business worries, asking her advice on small and personal matters, as he had been used to do in the days when Dora was still a child, and he and Jane were tried friends, and confided in one another. It struck Jane that he was not speaking as lightly as the slight worries warranted, that he spoke with deeper purpose.

"This reminds me of old times," he said, after a little spell of silence. "Do you remember those old times—when you were a girl and I was a lad?"

"Yes. They were very long ago," said Jane. She felt that her tone was ungracious. She could not speak of those past times, and smile, and be even-tempered.

"Not so very long ago," said Mark. "I often think of them."

"Do you?" said Jane quietly.

"And of what good friends we were. We were always good friends. I believe I

told you everything that happened to me."

Jane smiled faintly. She dimly understood in what direction Mark's speech was tending.

"I told you all my troubles—I remember that," said Mark.

Jane looked on before her at the end of the lane, and at the grey sky with its heavy, rain-laden clouds. Her lips smiled again slightly, but her eyes were dim with tears.

"You told me your worries too," said Mark, after a moment.

"Yes—when I had worries," said Jane. "Had I any? I suppose I had sometimes."

She quickened her steps a little, and her face suddenly flushed. She went on talking because she feared what Mark's next words would be. She scarcely knew what she said; she spoke fast and at random.

"Isn't it hard," she said, "to remember things that bothered one long ago? I can't remember anything. I don't think I had any troubles."

There was silence for a minute. The wind whistled plaintively through the bare hazel branches in the hedges along the lane; the clouds drifted heavily across the grey sky overhead; there was no warmth, no colour, no sunshine in the day; there was nothing to beguile Mark's thoughts to a happier theme.

"You have troubles nowadays, Jane?" he said, after a minute.

Jane looked at him quickly, and looked away again. She did not answer at once. Then she spoke suddenly.

"I can't tell you, Mark—I can't tell you," she said.

"I won't ask, then," said Mark in a colder tone.

"Life is full of trouble," said Jane, passionately and hopelessly. "I can't talk about it—I can't explain. Let us talk of something else."

After that morning, Mark made no more friendly advances. Every day, it seemed to Jane, something of warmth, something of friendliness, passed from his glance and tone. His coldness froze her. When she looked up suddenly and met his glance, he looked away. She felt that his faith in her was failing day by day, and day by day she distrusted more the strength of her own purpose; she began to be afraid of her own impulses. She began to wonder whether suddenly some moment, when Mark looked at her or spoke to her with this new look or tone of

unfriendliness, the temptation that beset her might not prove too strong—whether she might not suddenly break down; forget Mark's happiness, forget all, except the desire to stand well in his eyes; and, in some passionate, selfish, irresistible impulse, cast the truth at them all, and clear herself.

Dora was happily unconscious of Jane's temptation. She had almost forgotten, in the general disapprobation of Jane, that there was injustice in the disapprobation. She easily adapted her mind to the minds of those about her, and was naturally critical of her sister, whom others were regarding with disfavour. She was as light-hearted and gay-spirited as she had ever been; she was tyrannical and charmingly disdainful towards Mark; and she snubbed Jane's speeches pertly and with perfect ease.

Now and then, as the days went on, it struck Jane that Dora's charming pertness was less charming to Mark than of old. He was too obviously patient with her. He was thoughtful and preoccupied when she had done talking.

Jane and her mother were busy with flour and rolling-pin in the kitchen one morning, when Dora and Mark came in together.

Dora stood before the kitchen fire with one foot on the fender, and looked round lazily to see what work was going on.

"There's lemon-peel. You can bring me a bit of that lemon-peel, Mark," she ordered.

"The peel's for the pudding, Mark," said Mrs. Cossentine promptly. "Take an' put it out of her sight; Dora's as greedy as a child. Now you've come in, Dora, you can help Jane; there's the figs to stone, an' the currants are wantin' to be washed."

Dora was warming her hands before the fire, and admiring her pretty pink fingers, through which the bright light was shining. There was a pensive, musing look for a minute in her eyes. Next moment she let fall some fragment of her thoughts.

"If one was a lady there'd be no meals to see about," she said feelingly.

"There's the eggs to beat," continued her mother. "And Jane's hands is full."

"I'd like to be a lady," Dora said, with a little sigh.

"A fine lady?" said Mark, smiling at her.

"Oh no!" said Dora impatiently; "a shabby lady, of course—a lady in a turned gown, with cotton gloves, and ugly, old faded ribbons. How I hate looking shabby! and I always do—always. My feather's

out of curl, and my hat looks horrid. I daresay you think I like to look a fright. Perhaps you think a straight old feather and an old dyed gown look very pretty. How stupid you are, Mark!"

"Don't hearken to her, Mark," said Mrs. Cossentine.

"But she's about right," Mark admitted. "I'm stupid enough about clothes, I know."

"Oh yes, and about everything!" said Dora. "I believe you never care about your coats being hideous, and your boots having great stumping soles and ugly laces. I believe you like the thought of belonging to a nasty, common warehouse, and being dull always. One might as well be a beetle. Why weren't you a beetle? Fancy being a man, and always crawling on in the same way, and never knowing anything about Paris, and London, and the parks, and the carriages, and all the sights, and the shops, and the things to buy——"

Jane was moving about with more bustle than was necessary. Mrs. Cossentine wiped the flour from her hands, and stood upright.

"Why, wherever did you get such notions, Dora?" she said in amazement. "Who's been talkin' nonsense like that to you?"

The question, for some reason or other, had a strange and sudden effect on Dora. She started, and looked round quickly at Jane, and coloured. "I read it in a book," she said; "and there's nothing very funny—is there?—in not wanting to be dull. I always thought like that—I didn't want anyone to talk to me. Where's the figs, then? I can be stoning them."

An hour later Dora and Jane were left alone in the kitchen, and Jane seized the opportunity to say something she had long been intending to say. She pushed the citron, which she was slicing, away from her, and sat down at the table and looked across at Dora. Dora glanced up quickly and caught sight of Jane's face, and tried to silence the remonstrance that was coming.

"It's no good to be lecturing me, Jane. I don't care, and I shan't listen."

"You're behaving badly," said Jane quietly. "You're behaving very badly—that was all I was going to say."

"I don't care," repeated Dora.

There was a moment's pause. Then Jane looked again at her sister. She tried to speak gently, and her voice shook a little. "He's so good to you, Dora," she said; "so good to you, and so fond of you!"

"Oh, I know," said Dora. "Other people might be fond of me, too. Mark isn't the only one. And I'm tired of him. He's always about in the way, and I'm tired of always seeing him."

"Dora!"

"I am. I'm sick of it. He's so dull, and so good. I hate people to be so dreadfully good. Why does he have such a long holiday?"

"Were you ever in love with Mark, Dora?"

"In love with him? I don't know. He wanted me to be engaged to him, so I was."

"You are sorry about it now?"

"I don't know that I'm sorry. All girls, if they're nice-looking, are engaged. I was engaged before Sissy Maynard, and the girls at school used to call her the prettiest."

"You mean to be true to Mark, Dora? You are going to marry him?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so—some time. Not yet. Mark will never look like a gentleman, and talk about things that are interesting. He would think ugly great silver ear-rings just as nice as gold ones with pearls in them."

Argument with Dora was unprofitable; Jane went back to her work with a feeling of helplessness. She was realising how little she had served Mark by her sacrifice; how small was his prospect of happiness if his happiness was in Dora's hands.

During the next few days Dora perplexed Jane more and more. She was impatient, without her old endeavour to be charming; she answered Mark sharply, and did not smile to soften the sharp speech; she had suddenly lost all desire to please. And Mark seemed less distressed than thoughtful at the change. His eyes rested gravely upon her; he had ceased to smile at her pert little sallies.

At last the crisis came. It was late in the afternoon, a few days after the New Year. Mrs. Cossentine and Jane sat sewing by the fire, waiting for the others to come in to tea. The farmer had ridden to the town to market; Dora had gone alone to the village; and Mark, nearly an hour ago, had started to fetch her. It was a quiet evening; the click of the latch, as someone let the gate swing back, broke the silence sharply. Jane put down her work and listened to the steps coming through the yard.

"Dora's come without Mark," she said.

"They've missed, then," said Mrs. Cossentine comfortably.

Dora came in flushed and out of breath. Her face was tear-stained; but she had brushed away the tears, and her blue eyes were angry rather than sorrowful. She threw herself down impatiently before the fire, and looked, in excited, half-frightened defiance, from her mother to Jane.

"You an' Mark missed, then?" said Mrs. Cossentine.

"What need had Mark to come after me?" said Dora angrily. "What does he want always following me about?"

"He thought 't would be a dark walk round by the wood from the Binnys."

"I didn't go to the Binnys," said Dora recklessly. "Why shouldn't I go where I choose? And I shall. You can say what you like—you, and Mark, and Jane. Mark can tell father—and he will tell him—I don't care—he can tell him now if he likes. Father isn't in yet, is he?"

"No, he isn't back," said Mrs. Cossentine. "You and Mark haven't been quarrelling, Dora?"

"It's Mark's fault," said Dora, incoherently. "I don't care—it's his fault. He knows now that other people can think me pretty—he isn't the only person who's fond of me. He shouldn't have come to fetch me—I didn't tell him to. He wouldn't have met us then."

Jane was bending forward.

"Who was with you?" she said sternly. "Speak clearly, Dora."

"I am speaking clearly," said Dora. "I don't care—you can know it all—Mark will tell everyone, if I don't. And there's no harm in it—I'm not ashamed. I couldn't help it if he fell in love with me—"

"Who is she meaning—who is she meaning, Jane?" said Mrs. Cossentine, tremulous and bewildered.

Dora looked straight before her into the fire, and spoke with a little defiant air of unconcern.

"It's Mr. Cholmondeley. Jane knows he was in love with me—he's been in love with me months and months. Everyone thought 'twas Jane. He wouldn't have looked at Jane; he didn't think her pretty a bit. I couldn't help it if he fell in love with me. I can't help it if Mark's in a rage. I was saying good-bye to him, and Mark saw me. I don't care. He's more in love with me than Mark is; he wants me to go to London, so he can marry me and make me a lady, and give me all the things he wants to. He'll tell Mark now. I'm very glad! Mark shouldn't have gone

after him. I suppose he thought, like everyone else, that 'twas Jane Mr. Cholmondeley was in love with! I suppose he thought Jane was the prettiest. He'll be surprised that anyone should think most of me! Oh, I shall go upstairs: there is Mark come back."

Dora left the room, and Mrs. Cossentine, weeping and trembling, but still bewildered, rose up hurriedly and followed her. Jane waited a moment, then followed too.

That evening was the recapitulation of an evening which was still painfully clear in Jane's memory. If their father's anger had fallen heavily on Jane, it fell with doubled force on Dora, who had allowed Jane to bear her fault. Dora was called downstairs; and came back sobbing, with all her defiance lost in childish fright. Her mother came up, and cried with her, and tried to comfort her. And late in the evening the farmer walked wrathfully across the fields to the Hall and saw the Squire, and spoke his mind freely and emphatically.

The next morning the news went about the village that young Mr. Cholmondeley had gone. He had gone suddenly, and rumour was busy surmising where and wherefore. The servants from the Hall gave the information they possessed, but gave it guardedly, to correct the impression that they had no more to give. The young Squire was engaged to a lady "up the country," and he'd gone to visit her. Perhaps the Squire himself had suggested it. Perhaps Farmer Cossentine had had something to do with the suggestion. Farmer Cossentine was careful over his daughters, and his girl, Dora (no, not Jane, but Dora, the pretty one—Mr. Cholmondeley had always an eye for prettiness)—Dora had been meeting Mr. Cholmondeley, and taking presents from him, and listening to his flattery and love-making, and the farmer didn't like it; and the Squire hadn't liked it. And Mr. Cholmondeley was gone.

Mark, too, was going away. The engagement was broken off, and he was going immediately. Jane had heard the news from others. She had avoided Mark himself; all through the evening that had followed his discovery she had kept apart from him; she had not dared look at him to see his misery.

It was late the next morning that she came into the sitting-room, where Mark

was standing, and found herself alone with him. He looked at her gently and gravely as she entered, and she suddenly forgot what she had come to seek, and stood still beside him at the window, looking out at the wintry sunshine. After a minute Mark spoke.

"I wish you had told me, Jane," he said.

Jane looked out before her at the chrysanthemums bending in the breeze, and tried to think of some answer to make; and was silent.

"You tried to shield her. It was good of you—generous—like you," he said.

"Don't praise me," said Jane quickly. "You don't know. I did as I wished. I was less good than you think."

There was silence for a minute, then Mark spoke again, gravely, not looking at Jane:

"I blame myself," he said. "Dora was a child. I had no right to bind her as I did. She hated the engagement; she was grateful to anyone who promised to release her from it. That was it—that was it, Jane."

"I don't think that was it," said Jane.

"The engagement was a mistake," said Mark, slowly. "We both discovered it."

Jane did not speak for a moment; then she looked up searchingly at him. "You, too?" she said.

Mark looked at her gravely. "I, too," he said.

There was another pause, then: "You are going away?" said Jane.

"Yes."

"When are you going, Mark?"

"Now; to-day."

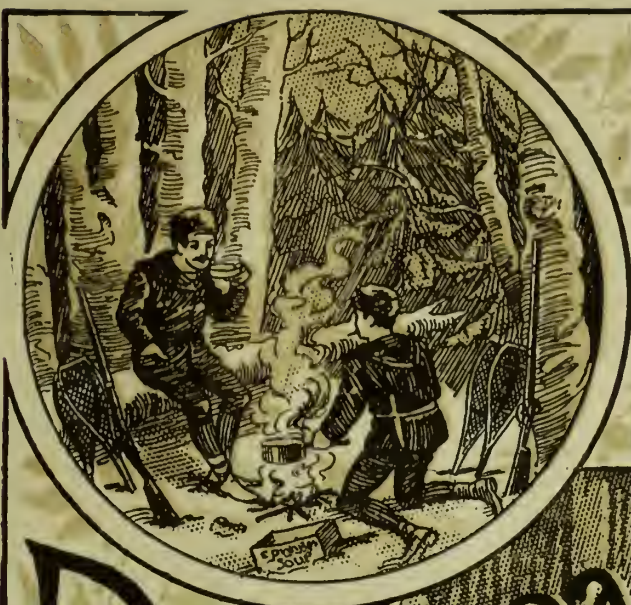
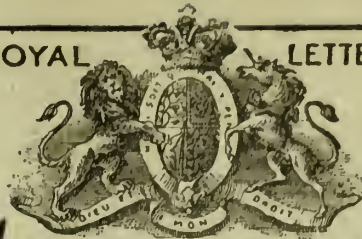
"You will never come any more," said Jane. "We shall not see you again?"

"Yes; I shall come again," said Mark.

They stood for a minute, side by side, in silence. The chrysanthemums beneath the window bent and rose as the breeze touched them; the sky above was a soft, tender grey; the wintry sunshine came in through the square panes and touched Jane's hair and dress, and fell along the floor. Mark looked at the sky and the chrysanthemums, and back again at Jane, and there his glance rested. He was suddenly conscious of his own thoughts—conscious of why he had found his engagement a mistake, and of why he would come back again.

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